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Third report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2001 (2011)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 2001 (2011), the Security Council requested me to report to it every four months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the third submitted pursuant to that resolution. It provides an update on the activities carried out by the United Nations in Iraq since the issuance of my previous report, dated 29 March 2012 (S/2012/185). It covers key political developments and regional and international events as well as operational and security matters concerning Iraq.

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Internal developments

2. During the reporting period, tensions between political blocs escalated and the national conference proposed by the President of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, and initially scheduled to be held on 5 April lost momentum. Meeting in Erbil on 28 April, following three days of consultations, President Talabani; the President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Massoud Barzani; the leader of the Al-Iraqiya bloc, Ayad Allawi; the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Usama al-Nujaifi; and the leader of the Sadrist Trend, Muqtada al-Sadr, called for a solution to the political impasse based on the Constitution and dialogue.

3. On 2 May, a delegation from the Sadrist Trend delivered a nine-point letter, signed by all participants in the Erbil meeting except President Talabani, to the leader of the National Alliance, Ibrahim al-Jaafari. The letter contained a number of demands, including non-interference in the work of the security forces, activation of the role of the Council of Representatives and limitation of the Prime Minister's position to two terms, and warned against the emerging trend of "dictatorship". All demands were to be met within 15 days or to be followed by a vote of no confidence against the Government. In response, the National Alliance reaffirmed its commitment to participating in a national conference to address the situation. On 17 May, President Talabani announced an eight-point initiative calling for adherence

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to the Constitution and other agreements as well as the cessation of negative media campaigns.

4. When the deadline expired on 17 May, representatives of Al-Iraqiya, the Kurdistan Alliance and the Sadrist Trend, meeting in Najaf on 19 May, set a one-week deadline for the National Alliance to replace the Prime Minister. They also sent a memo to President Talabani asking him to submit a request for a vote of no-confidence to the Council of Representatives within one week's time. On 9 June, the President turned down the request, stating that the number of members of the Council of Representatives who had signed the request, 160, fell short of the constitutionally mandated absolute majority threshold of 163. The Prime Minister's opponents later announced that they would pursue the alternative constitutional route of withdrawing confidence from the Prime Minister, whereby he would appear for questioning before the Council of Representatives and face a no-confidence vote if requested by one fifth of the members of the Council, as stipulated in article 61(8)(B)(2) of the Constitution.

5. From 1 to 9 April, the Vice-President of Iraq, Tariq Al-Hashimi, who is facing terrorism charges, visited Qatar and Saudi Arabia for meetings with senior officials. Since 9 April, the Vice-President has been in Turkey. His trial in absentia started on 3 May. The Human Rights Office of UNAMI has monitored the sessions of the trial, which have thus far been held on 15, 20 and 31 May and 19 June.

6. In April, political parties attempted to summon the Minister of Higher Education, Ali al-Adeeb, from the State of Law Coalition for questioning about the alleged sectarian bias in academic appointments and the enforcement of "de-Baathification" measures in Iraqi universities. On 7 May, following a legal challenge, the Federal Supreme Court imposed new procedural requirements for the exercise of parliamentary prerogatives in questioning ministers and scrutinizing ministerial activities pursuant to article 61(7)(C) of the Constitution. The ruling states that the legislature's request to question a minister must: (a) include specific allegations of constitutional and legal infractions; (b) provide specific details about relevant facts; and (c) provide evidence of the alleged breaches of the law or the Constitution and of the resulting material damage. This ruling has raised concerns about the constitutional framework of checks and balances as well as parliamentary independence from the executive branch.

7. On 3 May, the Council of Representatives selected the 19 judges to serve at the Court of Cassation (Court of Appeal). No women were appointed; one nominee was rejected on de-Baathification grounds.

8. On 1 April, the Kurdistan Regional Government halted oil exports until further notice, arguing that the Government of Iraq owed $1.5 billion to foreign oil companies working in the region. Furthermore, the Regional Government stated that the Government of Iraq should seek its approval before signing agreements for the development of the Kirkuk oil field. In response, the Government of Iraq reaffirmed its primacy in dealing with international oil companies.

9. On 5 April, the Kurdistan Regional Government's new 19-member Cabinet, headed by Nechirvan Barzani of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, was inaugurated. Imad Ahmed of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan took the oath as Deputy Prime Minister. The opposition Gorran, Kurdistan Islamic Union and Kurdistan Islamic

Group parties boycotted the vote, citing the alleged failure of the ruling parties to implement reforms.

10. During the reporting period, Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen representing Kirkuk in the Council of Representatives presented proposals for the draft election law that are currently under review by the Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives. Significant disagreement remains with regard to the system of representation, the voter list and the date of the election.

11. On 26 April, the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Kirkuk, Louis Sako, chaired a conference in Kirkuk with the theme "Building bridges for peace". Sponsored by the local archdiocese, the conference concluded with the signing of a seven-point declaration calling for the peaceful coexistence of Kirkuk ethnic components, the resolution of Kirkuk's outstanding issues through dialogue, and the reaching of consensus on a formula for holding Governorate Council elections.

12. On 8 May, the Council of Ministers met in Kirkuk. The Prime Minister of Iraq, Nuri al-Maliki, emphasized the "Iraqi identity" of the city. Kurdish ministers boycotted the session. On the following day, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government headed a ministerial delegation to Kirkuk and expressed his Government's readiness to support Kirkuk through the delivery of services and projects. The Council of Ministers also held meetings in Mosul on 29 May and in Nassiriya on 12 June.

13. On 4 April, the Kurdish Brotherhood List, which holds 12 seats in the Council of the Governorate of Ninewa, ended its three-year boycott of the Council and its dispute with the Al-Hadbaa List, following the Governorate Council elections held in January 2009.

B. Regional and international developments

14. On 29 March, Iraq made an important step towards full reintegration into the Arab world by hosting, in Baghdad, the twenty-third summit of the League of Arab States. Twenty-one of the 22 States members of the League attended the summit. I also attended the summit and held meetings with regional and national leaders. On 23 and 24 May, Iraq also hosted talks between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the "five plus one group" on the Iranian nuclear programme.

15. The bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait saw noticeable improvement during the reporting period. The second meeting of the Joint Iraq-Kuwait Ministerial Committee was held in Baghdad on 29 April, one month after the historic visit of the Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to Baghdad. The meeting resulted in the creation of a joint commission to manage the navigation of the Khor Abdullah shared waterway. In addition, the parties agreed to take measures necessary for the maintenance of their common boundary and the enhancement of joint security. Kuwait also indicated that it would open consulates in Basra and Erbil.

16. At the joint request of the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait, the United Nations reactivated the Iraq-Kuwait boundary maintenance project pursuant to Security Council resolution 833 (1993). From 4 to 11 June, the United Nations conducted a field assessment mission and held technical meetings in Kuwait and Iraq with delegations appointed by their respective Governments. The parties jointly

requested the United Nations to begin the maintenance work (phase III of the project) by 31 October 2012, subject to the fulfilment by the parties of the prerequisites for the commencement of the field maintenance work, including the removal of inter-pillar obstacles. The United Nations will continue to support the parties' commendable efforts towards the completion of the project in a swift and flexible manner.

17. In the context of his mandate, my High-level Coordinator on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains, Gennady Tarasov, visited Kuwait in April and Iraq and Kuwait in May to hold consultations with the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities as well as other stakeholders. While extending the financing for his mandate until 31 December 2012, the Security Council supported my recommendation that Iraq and Kuwait begin exploring other arrangements to consolidate and ensure continued cooperation in the search for missing persons and property, including the national archives.

18. During the reporting period, Turkish armed forces carried out several military operations, including aerial bombing and artillery shelling, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq against the Kurdistan Workers Party armed group in response to its terrorist activities.

III. Activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

19. Amid the growing political impasse, UNAMI intensified its consultations with a wide spectrum of interlocutors to encourage them to find common ground and develop a compromise solution to the current impasse. During his visit to Erbil on 29 and 30 April, my Special Representative met with President Talabani, President Barzani, Ayad Allawi and Muqtada al-Sadr. On 12 June, he met with President Talabani and President Barzani in the Kurdistan Region. During the reporting period, he also met with Ibrahim al-Jaafari; Ammar al-Hakim, head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq; senior members of the Gorran Party; and Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Sistani. His discussions were focused on the need for political blocs to resolve their differences through direct dialogue in accordance with the Constitution. My Special Representative offered the Mission's assistance.

20. UNAMI also continued to engage on the constitutional agenda through meetings with members of the Council of Representatives from various blocs to urge them to address relevant legislative processes, including those relating to the hydrocarbon law and the law on the Federal Supreme Court.

21. National reconciliation, in particular issues related to the disputed internal boundaries, remains a central pillar of the Mission's mandate and a top priority for the United Nations. While no progress was achieved in that regard, my Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, Electoral Assistance and Constitutional Support visited Kirkuk and held consultations with the Governor, the Deputy Governor, the Chair of the Provincial Council and representatives of political blocs on the way forward with regard to holding the Governorate Council elections in Kirkuk.

22. With a view to advancing the mandate of UNAMI in terms of regional dialogue, my Special Representative visited Tehran from 5 to 9 May and met with senior officials, including the Speaker of the Majlis, Ali Larijani; the Vice-President, Mohammad Javad Mohammadizadeh; and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Aliakbar Salehi. He discussed the implementation of the Mission's mandate and the strengthening of Iran-Iraq and regional cooperation on issues of common concern such as combating dust storms and other cross-boundary environmental issues.

23. On 6 and 7 June, on his third visit to Kuwait, my Special Representative met with the Emir; the Prime Minister, Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah; the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah; the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ahmed Al-Saadoun; and members of the diplomatic community. Welcoming the improvement in the bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait in the wake of his participation in the summit of the League of Arab States, the Emir expressed his hope for the swift implementation of the boundary maintenance project.

24. On 30 April and 2 and 12 May, the Security Council Resolution 1325 Group, an association of civil society organizations, conducted a series of workshops in Baghdad on a national plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The workshop brought together parliamentarians, Government officials and civil society organizations, as well as representatives of the United Nations and donors. The Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Ibtihal Gassid al-Zaidi, emphasized that the proposed national strategy on the advancement of women would support the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) by promoting the participation of women in peacebuilding activities. The participants raised the concern, however, that women continued to be marginalized in discussions on issues of national interest, which was impeding progress towards gender equality and women's political participation. During the reporting period, my Special Representative hosted a meeting between the Minister of State for Women's Affairs and the diplomatic community in order to raise awareness about the need to increase women's political participation.

B. Electoral assistance activities

25. During the reporting period, further progress was achieved on the selection of a new Board of Commissioners for the Independent High Electoral Commission. On 21 April, the Parliamentary Committee of Experts shortlisted 60 of the 286 most qualified applicants, taking into consideration geographical and religious diversity in accordance with the Independent High Electoral Commission law of 2007. The 60 candidates included 30 Shiites, 18 Sunnis, 10 Kurds, one Christian and one Yazidi; five women were among them.

26. From 5 to 10 May, the 60 candidates were interviewed on their knowledge of elections, public administration, constitutional law, language and information technology. Interviews were conducted in the presence of representatives of UNAMI and non-governmental organizations, and all interviews were recorded. In addition, UNAMI assisted in formulating the interview questions and provided advice on the complaint mechanism and public outreach related to the process. In the meantime, on 19 April the Council of Representatives extended the term of the current Board

of Commissioners for a three-month period until 28 July, by which time the selection of the new Commissioners was expected to be completed.

27. On 12 April, the Chair of the Independent High Electoral Commission, Faraj al-Haidari, and Commissioner Karim al-Tamimi were arrested and detained for three days for the alleged misuse of State resources to pay bonuses of about $140 from the Commission's funds to several employees of the property registration department. The arrests sparked strong reactions on the part of political blocs. On 26 April, Commissioner Usama al-Ani was arrested on charges of financial misconduct. He was released a few hours later, after questioning. On 27 April, a judicial committee was established by the Higher Judicial Council to look into the charges of corruption against Commissioners; several Commissioners have since testified before the committee. A number of other investigations are ongoing with respect to all Commissioners and the senior management of the Commission.

28. My Special Representative and my Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, Electoral Assistance and Constitutional Support met with the Board of Commissioners on several occasions during the reporting period and discussed the status of electoral preparations and the work of the Commission, as well as the legal and administrative challenges that the Independent High Electoral Commission has faced since the 2010 elections. The Commission has begun preparations for the holding of Governorate Council elections in those governorates not forming part of a region. These are scheduled for early in 2013 and will represent another significant electoral process across the country.

29. On 16 May, the Commission engaged the authorities of the Kurdistan Region on the pending legislative and budgetary decisions required for the holding of the Region's Governorate Council elections as scheduled on 27 September. The Commission also raised the issue of the operational challenges of the voter registration process, which had been postponed until 1 July. On 4 June, after an additional meeting with the Commission, the Region's authorities decided to indefinitely postpone the elections.

30. The United Nations integrated electoral team, comprising UNAMI, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), working under the overall leadership of UNAMI, continued to provide capacity-building assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission. Areas of focus during the reporting period included public outreach, public surveys, electoral security and the updating of voter registration software. The United Nations team also supported the Commission in the initial stages of preparing for Governorate Council elections in 2013.

C. Human rights activities and developments

31. During the reporting period, there were several high-casualty attacks across the country. On 19 April, a wave of bombings and attacks in six governorates killed at least 50 people and injured some 250. On 31 May, in various attacks in Baghdad, 33 civilians were killed and 14 injured. On 4 June, a suicide attack on a Shiite religious office in Baghdad for which the Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility left 20 people dead and 110 injured. On 13 June, up to 27 car bombs were detonated across Iraq. In Baghdad, 10 attacks killed 33 Shiite pilgrims and security personnel and injured another 61. In Hilla, 22 people, mainly civilians,

were killed when a bomb was detonated outside a restaurant usually frequented by police personnel. On 16 June, 42 Shiite pilgrims and security personnel were killed and 135 injured in Baghdad.

32. On 9 April, the Council of Representatives voted to endorse the 11 permanent Commissioners, including two women, and three back-up Commissioners, including two women, of the first Independent High Commission for Human Rights of Iraq. The one-year process of selecting and appointing the Commissioners has been supported by UNAMI and UNDP. On 18 April, my Special Representative met with the newly endorsed Commissioners to congratulate them on their appointment and to pledge continued support for the building of a strong and credible institution.

33. The protection and integration of minority communities in Iraq constitute priorities of the Mission's work in the promotion of national reconciliation and dialogue. UNAMI continues to support the Iraqi authorities in their efforts to include minorities in all spheres of life. On 30 April, my Special Representative met with Papa Sheikh, the Grand Sheikh of the Yazidis, in Sheikhan in northern Iraq. He also visited the Lalish temple, the holiest shrine for the Yazidi community in Iraq.

34. On 22 May, UNAMI conducted a joint mission with the United Nations country team to Ninewa and met with the Committee on Ethnic and Religious Communities in Ninewa. Participants in the meeting included representatives of the Shabak, Yazidi, Christian and Turkmen communities. The minorities appealed for the Mission's intervention in resolving the issue of disputed internal boundaries through constitutional means. They also called for the ethnic and religious groups to play a larger role in policing their own communities or to be integrated into the Iraqi security forces as part of a unified army and police force.

35. The Parliament of the Kurdistan Region adopted a general amnesty law for the Kurdistan Region on 4 June, at its second hearing in that regard. The law was activated after the endorsement of President Barzani on 13 June. It had been the subject of many closed-door sessions of the regional Parliament. On 10 April, an earlier draft of the law had been adopted by the Parliament, but the bill had not been signed by President Barzani. Nine crimes are excluded from the final version of the amnesty law, including crimes relating to sexual abuse, terrorism and drug trafficking.

36. On 4 April, the President of Iraq signed a draft law on counter-trafficking. On 21 and 22 May, the International Alliance for Justice, an Iraqi non-governmental organization, with the support of the Government of Italy, organized an international conference in Sulaimaniyah on human trafficking. Participants included officials from the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as representatives of political parties, other non-governmental organizations and the diplomatic community. UNAMI and the International Organization for Migration briefed participants on the transnational nature of the crime of trafficking and the importance of cooperation between Iraq and other countries in the region and beyond, and emphasized the readiness of the United Nations to assist the Government of Iraq in the law's implementation.

37. During the reporting period, the Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting on grave violations against children, co-chaired by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNAMI, verified the conflict-related killing of 52 children and maiming of 139 others. Direct attacks were reported against schools

and medical facilities, including emergency rescue teams and ambulances, as well as the alleged recruitment and use of children by armed groups such as Al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq. The Government of Iraq has yet to establish, in line with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), a mechanism for formal interaction with the Country Task Force, as requested by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict (see S/AC.51/2011/6). As part of its Justice for Children programme, UNICEF trained 271 staff from the Ministries of Human Rights, Justice, Youth and Sport, Labour and Social Affairs, Education and Health on the provision of legal assistance to detained children.

38. On 3 May, UNAMI and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized a conference in Baghdad on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day. Participants included media groups, journalists, bloggers, academics, parliamentarians, civil society groups, Commissioners of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights and representatives of the international community. Discussions covered the State's commitments to media freedoms made during the universal periodic review process, threats to media freedom and the situation of journalists in Iraq, as well as an overview of current and pending legislation related to media in Iraq. Participants also discussed the draft media legislation currently under review by the Council of Representatives.

39. Journalists and media professionals in Iraq continue to face arbitrary arrest and detention and to suffer from intimidation and attacks as a result of their profession. During the reporting period, UNESCO and UNOPS trained 240 media professionals in Basra, Erbil and Baghdad on security, self-protection, risk management and trauma first aid to enable them to cope with existing professional threats and risks.

40. On 30 May, UNAMI and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published their joint annual report on the human rights situation in Iraq for 2011. The report recognizes that the Government of Iraq has made some progress in implementing measures to protect and promote the human rights of the Iraqi people. However, the impact of those measures on the overall human rights situation remains limited.

Camp New Iraq (formerly Camp Ashraf)

41. Transfers of Camp New Iraq residents to Camp Hurriya, the temporary transit location, took place on 16 April and 4 May, bringing the total number of residents in Camp Hurriya to nearly 2,000. Some 1,300 residents of Camp New Iraq have yet to be relocated. No transfer has taken place since 4 May, as the remaining residents of Camp New Iraq refused to move to Camp Hurriya as a result of several demands regarding living conditions prevailing there. The Government of Iraq opposes demands that exceed the temporary nature of Camp Hurriya and has, on several occasions, expressed to my Special Representative its determination to close Camp New Iraq.

42. UNAMI has facilitated intensive negotiations between the residents and the Government of Iraq to overcome the deadlock, with particular focus on the humanitarian needs of the residents. On 11 and 23 June, in the light of the lack of progress in the negotiations between the two sides and the lack of willingness on the part of third countries to receive eligible residents of Camp Hurriya, my Special Representative issued statements urging the residents and the Government of Iraq to

cooperate for the swift and peaceful completion of the relocation process. This would require additional efforts by the Government of Iraq to meet the humanitarian needs of the residents and greater flexibility on the part of the residents with respect to the remaining transfers.

43. In parallel to the relocation process, as at 28 June UNHCR had completed the registration of 1,765 individuals and conducted refugee status determination interviews for 509 asylum seekers. A total of 283 individuals have been granted refugee status, while the other cases are being reviewed.

44. Simultaneously, UNHCR is seeking durable solutions for those falling under its mandate, through the resettlement, consular and/or parole channels, as well as through voluntary repatriation to the Islamic Republic of Iran. In June, a delegation from the Government of Iraq visited Geneva, Brussels and Paris to urge States members of the European Union to offer resettlement opportunities. Without member States' generosity and strong commitment to accept refugees and other ex-residents of Camp New Iraq on their territories, no durable solution can be achieved.

D. Development and humanitarian assistance

45. The humanitarian crisis in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic continues to spill over into Iraq. As at 10 June, Iraq hosted 5,406 Syrian refugees, a much smaller number compared with flows of refugees to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. In response, local authorities established camps in Dohuk, Anbar and Diyala governorates. In turn, the Syrian Arab Republic hosts the largest number of Iraqi refugees, including 87,000 who have been registered by UNHCR.

46. Against this backdrop, UNAMI is working closely with the coordination mechanism established in the Syrian Arab Republic by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Humanitarian field staff in Iraq are monitoring the situation along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure the readiness of the United Nations to respond to any population movements into Iraq. In accordance with its mandate, UNHCR is working closely with the Kurdistan Regional Government; United Nations agencies, funds and programmes; the International Organization for Migration; and non-governmental organizations to coordinate and scale up the emergency response, including assistance and protection, to both the influx of Syrian refugees and the increasing number of Iraqi refugees returning to Iraq. Support for the national governorate emergency cells continues as well, by means of preparedness training, assessment support and information-sharing to allow for a coordinated response.

47. UNHCR also continues to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to Iraqi internally displaced persons and returnees, and to work to find durable solutions, in coordination with the Government of Iraq and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), in the areas of displacement and return. A total of 25,610 internally displaced persons and 8,330 Iraqi refugees were registered with the Ministry of Displacement and Migration as returnees in April. On 5 April, as part of a joint project of the Government, UNHCR and UN-Habitat, two pieces of land in Baghdad were allocated for the construction of shelters for 700 displaced families currently living in substandard settlements in the capital.

48. As my new Deputy Special Representative for Development and Humanitarian Support, Jacqueline Badcock, took up her duties in May, the United Nations country team renewed its offer of support to the Ministry of Planning regarding the national development plan for 2010-2014. With the plan currently under revision and projected to cover the period 2013-2017, the United Nations country team placed its technical capacity at the disposal of the Ministry and continued to advocate the integration of the Millennium Development Goals as a guiding framework. The Government of Iraq announced on 31 May that an allocation of $30 million would be made from a cost-sharing allocation for development interventions with international partners, to co-finance the development activities of the United Nations country team under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. A list of 50 joint programmes and seven projects has been submitted to the Government of Iraq for co-financing in 2012.

49. By the end of May, the total contributions to the Iraq United Nations Development Assistance Framework Fund stood at approximately $15 million. The United Nations country team requires additional donor funding for the effective implementation of the Framework in line with national priorities. On 5 April, the Fund's steering committee approved a new project, entitled "Enhancing transparent participatory governance and human rights", for a total amount of $3 million, which will help to address governance and human rights issues in Iraq.

50. The United Nations Population Fund is supporting the Ministry of Youth and Sport and Iraqi young people in jointly developing the first national youth strategy for Iraq. During the reporting period, broad consultations took place with more than 1,300 young people from the 18 governorates to seek their views on the challenges of Iraqi youth, their rights and role in society, and expectations regarding the strategy. On 31 May, UNESCO launched a project entitled "Fighting youth unemployment through education in the Kurdistan Region". The project will provide 400 male and female graduates with entrepreneurship training that will introduce them to self-management techniques and enable them to set up small businesses.

51. In support of the global focus on the environment, the United Nations country team continued its efforts to address issues related to the rapid increase of dust storms in the region. UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme and UNAMI attended a conference on 23 and 24 May in the Islamic Republic of Iran to discuss the technical aspects of dust storms. This has facilitated collaboration between Iraqi and Iranian officials and experts, while continuing the engagement with the Iraqi interministerial task force on drought risk management mandated to guide Iraq's response on dust storms.

52. With the support of UNESCO and UNDP, the Government of Iraq is developing a national framework for integrated drought risk management, a project that includes a long-term water management strategy and measures to account for and mitigate the risk of drought. UNDP continued to provide support to the national committee for disaster risk reduction in formulating a draft legislative framework.

53. On 31 May, the Kurdistan Regional Government, supported by UNICEF, launched a solid-waste master plan for the Sulaimaniyah Governorate. The master plan will guide the efforts of decision makers, service providers, community representatives and development partners to address the solid-waste needs and environmental concerns of Sulaimaniyah.

54. The World Health Organization (WHO) supported the finalization by the Government of Iraq of the national maternal child health and reproductive health strategy for 2012-2016, a framework for the first national multisectoral health promotion. In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, WHO also assisted the Ministry of Health in developing and finalizing a comprehensive multisectoral workplan to address zoonotic diseases in Iraq.

55. The preliminary report of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4 was launched by the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation and UNICEF on 20 May, containing initial findings of the most comprehensive survey on children in Iraq conducted since 2006. The Government of Iraq and its partners have made progress in such areas as birth registration, immunization coverage, increased institutional delivery, gender parity in primary school and child labour. However, increased attention is needed in order to reduce the mortality rates of children under 5 years old, especially newborns, and to address chronic undernutrition.

56. Iraq's first nutrition strategy for 2012-2021, developed jointly by the Government of Iraq, UNICEF, WHO, the World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO, was endorsed by the Ministry of Health on 1 April. The strategy will provide guidance for decision makers and national programme managers on nutrition-related interventions.

57. On 29 and 30 April, FAO hosted a workshop with the Government of Iraq to discuss a road map for the agricultural sector in Iraq for 2012-2016. The workshop examined current agricultural development in Iraq, taking stock of ongoing policy and economic and social developments and reviewing the emergency assistance provided by FAO in rehabilitating the agricultural sector. The workshop resulted in a joint understanding regarding the medium-term agricultural needs of Iraq and how FAO and the Government of Iraq should proceed in developing programmes and partnerships in support of an agricultural recovery in the country.

58. During the reporting period, WFP continued to build the capacity of the Government of Iraq to implement the national school feeding programme while supporting the reform of social safety net programmes. A study tour to the United States was conducted in April with the Ministry of Education to examine the United States school meal and breakfast programme in order to inform the design of a national school feeding programme for Iraq. WFP is also working with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to improve poverty targeting in social safety net programmes, including through the training of Ministry staff in monitoring and evaluation and the development of a management information system.

59. In April, UNOPS completed a project aimed at improving emergency medical response in the Kurdistan Region. With funding provided by the World Bank to the Kurdistan Region Ministry of Health, the project resulted in: (a) the construction, rehabilitation and equipping of blood banks and emergency coordination centres; (b) the establishment of a region-wide radio system; (c) the procurement of 12 ambulances; and (d) the training of more than 500 paramedics, ambulance drivers and radio operators to provide immediate assistance for citizens in health emergencies.

60. On 26 April, as a result of sustained advocacy efforts led by my Special Representative, the Government of Iraq reaffirmed its commitment to the national

mine action programme and took a number of critical decisions to strengthen its institutional capacities in order to meet the obligations set out in the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, by nominating the Ministry of Defence to provide materials for all demining activities in central and southern Iraq, agreeing to appoint a Director General for the Directorate of Mine Action within the Ministry of Environment, and activating interministerial cooperation.

61. In the Kurdistan Region, UNOPS continued its support for the development of a compact between civil society organizations and local authorities framing areas for cooperation. In June, two study tours took place, in Estonia and Lebanon, followed by an induction workshop for the members of the project implementation committee.

IV. Security and operational issues

62. During the reporting period, the overall security situation in Iraq remained unpredictable, with a significant number of deadly attacks, especially during religious celebrations. Iraqi security forces and civil servants are often targeted in sophisticated attacks. The risks posed to the United Nations by such threats as abductions, terrorist attacks and indirect weapons fire continue to be significant, requiring the Organization to adopt and implement substantial mitigation measures to ensure an adequate level of security for its staff, assets and operations, despite inherent constraints.

63. As previously reported, since 2008, at the request of the Government of Iraq and in the light of the changed circumstances in the country since 2005, the United Nations and the Government have been negotiating a new status of mission agreement, the absence of which has increasingly hindered the Mission's ability to effectively and efficiently implement its mandate. UNAMI and the United Nations country team have experienced increasing operational and logistical difficulties, including long delays in receiving customs clearance for crucial items and the imposition of visa requirements and fees, which have severely disrupted the deployment/rotation of United Nations Guard Unit troops. UNAMI has continued to actively follow up on this issue.

64. In response to international financial constraints and in an effort to streamline its activities and posture, UNAMI has undertaken an extensive review of its operations and of the delivery of its mandated activities, which coincides with the 2013 budget preparations, leading to a significant budget reduction for the second half of the biennium.

V. Observations

65. I am concerned that political tensions have increased since the issuance of my previous report. The sustained political impasse is a source of distraction for political leaders, preventing them from focusing on important issues of governance and legislation. Unless the impasse is meaningfully addressed by all parties, it could hamper efforts to move the country forward towards progress and stability. Political tensions could also have an adverse impact on the security situation.

66. I therefore urge Iraqi political leaders to work together in a spirit of compromise and inclusiveness, in accordance with the Constitution, towards a peaceful and prosperous future for Iraq. The current impasse needs to be resolved swiftly and in a transparent manner. UNAMI stands ready to assist all sides in promoting dialogue in an impartial manner.

67. The current political impasse is also hindering efforts to resolve outstanding issues pertaining to the disputed internal boundaries. I continue to firmly believe that addressing these issues remains central to the future stability of Iraq. The Standing Consultative Mechanism, a forum designed to bring key stakeholders together under the auspices of UNAMI, has failed to meet for more than a year despite the efforts of my Special Representative. I therefore call upon the political leaders to reaffirm their commitment to resolving outstanding issues between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government. UNAMI is ready to provide all necessary assistance in that regard, including by facilitating the holding of the overdue Kirkuk Governorate Council elections and the adoption of hydrocarbon legislation.

68. I am encouraged by Iraq's successful hosting of the twenty-third summit of the League of Arab States in Baghdad, which attests to the great strides that Iraq has made towards its reintegration into the international community. I am also encouraged by the recent progress made in the bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait, including the historic visit of the Emir of Kuwait to Baghdad to attend the League of Arab States summit and the holding of the second meeting of the Joint Iraq-Kuwait Ministerial Committee. I urge both countries to sustain this momentum and to seize the opportunity to resolve all outstanding issues and fully normalize their relations. The United Nations remains committed to providing all the assistance necessary to facilitate Iraq's exit from its obligations under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, including through the work of my High-level Coordinator for the return of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals as well as property and through the timely completion of the Iraq-Kuwait boundary maintenance project.

69. Regional stability remains a crucial factor for Iraq's transition to a peaceful and stable democracy. Therefore, I continue to be deeply concerned about the escalation of violence in the Syrian Arab Republic, which could have an adverse political and humanitarian impact on the region, including Iraq. I call upon the Government of Iraq to extend hospitality and generosity towards Syrian nationals fleeing ongoing unrest and violence in their home country.

70. I welcome the significant progress made in the selection of a new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission and urge the Council of Representatives to complete the process in a timely manner in order to ensure that the Commission is fully operational and capable of organizing important upcoming electoral events. It is important that the Council of Representatives ensure that the selection is made on the basis of merit and through a consultative and transparent process, and that women and minorities are adequately represented. As part of efforts to promote democratic reform, I call upon the Iraqi authorities to continue to ensure the independence, impartiality and credibility of the Commission as a viable constitutional institution, and to provide it with the resources necessary to enable it to effectively carry out its work. The United Nations will continue to provide

technical support and assistance to the Commission for the planning and holding of credible elections.

71. I also welcome the endorsement by the Council of Representatives of the Commissioners of the first Independent High Commission for Human Rights of Iraq. This is a historic achievement for the promotion and protection of the rights of all Iraqis. The United Nations will continue to offer technical advice and support with a view to building up a strong and credible institution.

72. I am encouraged by the progress made by the Government of Iraq in implementing measures to protect and promote the human rights of the Iraqi people. However, the impact of those measures on the overall human rights situation remains limited and fragile. Journalists and media professionals in Iraq continue to face arbitrary arrest and detention and to suffer from intimidation and attacks in relation to their profession. The administration of justice and the rule of law remain weak. In this regard, overreliance on confessions is worrying. I also reiterate my deep concern regarding the continued implementation of the death penalty in Iraq.

73. I urge that the plight of displaced persons and refugees not be forgotten and that the Government of Iraq, in partnership with the international community, continue its efforts to find durable solutions to the problem of displacement. The continued internal displacement of some 1.3 million Iraqis poses multiple challenges that may be tackled successfully only through a comprehensive strategy for ending displacement. Of particular concern is the situation of Iraqi displaced persons in hundreds of illegal settlements across the country, who have little access to basic services and face the threat of eviction. A policy aimed at halting evictions, which themselves inevitably lead to secondary displacement, must remain a priority for the Government of Iraq until a durable solution is found.

74. I welcome the peaceful and orderly transfers of residents from Camp New Iraq to Camp Hurriya. I am concerned, however, about the recent lack of progress in the relocation process. I call upon the Government of Iraq and the residents of both Camp New Iraq and Camp Hurriya to continue to work together in a constructive and flexible manner in order to complete the relocation process without further delay. I particularly urge the residents of both camps to cooperate with the Iraqi authorities. I reiterate that the Government of Iraq bears the primary responsibility for the security of the residents of both camps, who must fully abide by the laws of Iraq. UNAMI and UNHCR remain committed to a peaceful and durable solution. In this regard, I continue to urge Member States to extend their humanitarian generosity and offer resettlement opportunities to eligible residents, as well as to support the efforts of the United Nations by providing necessary financial assistance.

75. The continuing absence of a status of mission agreement for UNAMI has adversely affected the ability of the Mission and of the United Nations country team to carry out mandated activities. Despite the repeated follow-up with the Government of Iraq, our efforts have not yielded a satisfactory conclusion. Accordingly, I again strongly urge the Government of Iraq to take the steps necessary to bring the agreement into force, without further delay.

76. Finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my Special Representative, Martin Kobler, and all United Nations staff serving with him in Iraq for their dedication in assisting the people and the Government of Iraq.